

Working the Web: Web Searches, RSS Feeds and More

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Introduction

- Internet is a good way to obtain information, BUT:
 - Rapid change in technology
 - Lots of info available
 - Increasing mobility and interactivity
 - Sometimes can be a bit overwhelming
- This presentation:
 - Current trends in internet use
 - Introduce AgManager.info
 - RSS feeds, searching, navigation

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A Few Current Trends

- **Rapid information obsolescence** – frequent updates/revisions requiring diligence to view.
- **Increasing mobility** : laptop computers, PDA's and cell phones – real-time information.
- **Greater interactivity**: blogs, wikis, “YouTube” – takes time to find things; can waste time using it.
- **Visual media** – video, graphics, GIS. Specialized software, download times.
- **Limited number of sites** visited. Most usually go on-line for a specific site.

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Development of *AgManager.info*

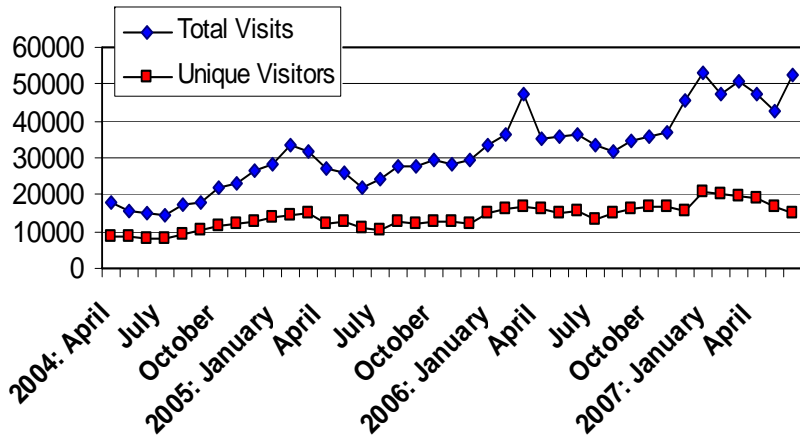
- 2001-2002 – *AgManager.info* developed and launched as a single, comprehensive site.
 - Initial focus on risk management, crops, and livestock marketing. Now:
 - Grain basis tool/maps, decision tools, updates
 - Publication of upcoming events/conferences
- Current usage of *AgManager.info*
 - 50,000 visits from 20,000 unique visitors per month (more than double since 2004)
 - Most popular sections:
 - Livestock, Crops, Farm management, Upcoming events, Agribusiness, Policy

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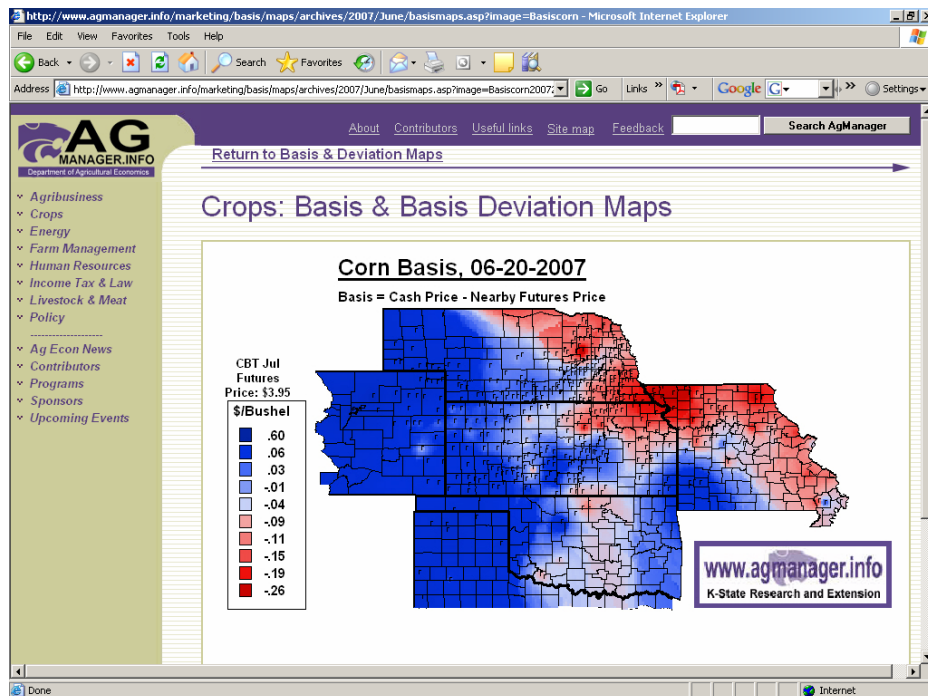
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Monthly Visits/Visitors to AgManager (2004-2007)



Future Development of AgManager.info

- Notification of changes and updates using RSS feeds (currently uses listserv to send emails)
- Development of the grain basis tool and maps to allow easier use and to expand the scope.
- Web tools, operated in the web browser, as opposed to Excel spreadsheets, as now.
- Redesign



Working the Web: Searching

- Search directories such as Google or Yahoo have changed searching. Still need skill:
 - Be specific. Use unique terms.
 - Enclose phrases in parentheses (“”)
 - Word order matters: policy agricultural versus agricultural policy
 - Use ‘OR’ (capital letters) to find pages that include either of two search terms
 - ‘+’ search, where the ‘+’ sign includes common words usually ignored (the, I, for, etc)
 - To search for your term and any synonyms, use ‘~’ sign

Working the Web: Searching

- Others:
 - To search just one site, use the word 'site:' then the website to search following your search term.
Example: farm bill site:AgManager.info
 - To search for a number range: use 2 periods (..) between the upper and lower number.
Example: DVD player \$50..\$100 to search for a DVD player that costs between \$50 and \$100.
 - Fill in the blank search: use an asterisk (*) to answer something you don't know. Example: Kansas State * will return results for Kansas State University, Kansas State Wildcats, Kansas State Fair, etc.
 - Highlight a word on a website, right-click, and Google-search for it.

Gathering Information Via RSS Feeds

- RSS (Real Simple Syndication) feeds: access information without visiting each website
- Browse the RSS feed on your reader. If there is a topic of interest, go directly to the site for the full article.
- Sites with RSS feeds will have buttons such as those shown below:



Using RSS Feeds

- Websites create RSS feeds that can be subscribed to. When the content on the website changes, the news reader will retrieve it automatically and display changes.
- Many news readers available including:
 - Yahoo, GoogleReader, NewzCrawler, FeedDemon, or NewsGator, among others.
- It is also possible to subscribe using Internet Explorer 7.0 or Mozilla Firefox 2.0.

Subscribing to RSS Feeds

- If using a reader, the general steps to follow are:
 - 1) Right-click an RSS/XML button on a website, then click Copy Link Location (Firefox) or Copy Shortcut (Internet Explorer).
 - 2) Go to your News reader and choose to add new feed.
 - 3) Past the URL in the appropriate box and click Add.
- Most readers offer various options for organizing the RSS feeds you have signed up for. Experiment with these to organize your material in the most useful way.

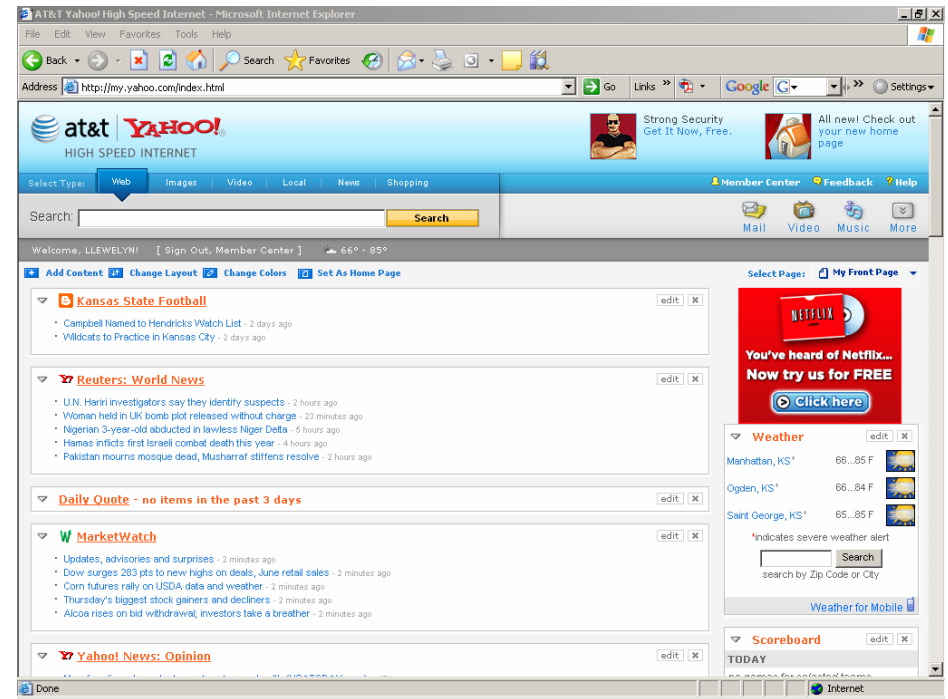
Subscribing to RSS Feeds

- If using Internet Explorer 7.0:
 - 1) Click the RSS button in the Internet Explorer toolbar
 - 2) Choose a folder or create a new folder for the feed
 - 3) Click “Subscribe”.
- If using Mozilla Firefox 2.0:
 - 1) Click on an RSS/XML button on a site
 - 2) Click “Subscribe Now”.
 - 3) Choose a folder or create a new folder for the feed, then click OK.

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Navigation

- Links generally underlined and/or bold
- Use Bookmarks (Favorites) to save sites
- Use “In-Line Auto Complete” in Tools/Options menu to save typing in sites
- Use on-site menus and “recent updates”
- Use the right-click on the mouse:
 - Save, print, move forward or backward, add a shortcut or bookmark the page, or to search for highlighted terms.
- Use the “Back” and “Forward” buttons on the tool bar to save time.

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Using AgManager

- Left-side menu with topic areas
- “Site Updates” on right side
- “Site Map” on upto menu
- “Contributors” link on left side and top menus
- Search tool in upper right corner
- Events graphics in middle and also accessed through “Upcoming Events” link on left
- Four categories of materials:
 - Updates
 - Data and charts
 - Research and white papers
 - Decision tools

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Downloads and Software

- Adobe Reader (PDF), Adobe Flash (animation), Adobe Shockwave (multi-media).
- Other multi-media: RealPlayer, QuickTime, Windows Media Player.
- Instant Messaging: Yahoo Messenger and MSN Messenger.
- Telephony: Skype
- Good source: www.Download.com

Miscellaneous

- Dealing with malware:
 - Viruses (AVG Anti-Virus at www.grisoft.com)
 - Anti-spyware at www.download.com
 - Use a firewall (Windows XP has a built-in firewall)
- Be careful of spam and “phishing”
- Hoaxes and urban legends: www.snopes.com
- Old sites or information that has been removed or changed: www.archive.org
- Keep programs updated. Microsoft releases updates on the 2nd Tuesday of each month for Windows.

Miscellaneous

- Blogs:
 - Sponsored blogs such as the University of Illinois (www.farmgate.uiuc.edu), or news blogs (almost everywhere)
 - Start your own using one of several blog sites, including Blogspot (www.blogspot.com), Blogger (www.blogger.com)
- Other fun/useful programs/sites
 - Map programs Mapquest, GoogleMaps, or YahooMaps.
 - Satellite views: GoogleEarth.
 - YouTube
- Browsers:
 - Internet Explorer version 7 (Microsoft)
 - Mozilla Firefox (version 2.0)
 - Netscape
 - For Apple, Safari browser 3.0 in beta (test) version

The Final Word

- Lots of info available on the internet
- Efficient internet use:
 - Find a limited number of useful sites
 - Information aggregation: RSS feeds
 - Search and navigation skills
 - Appropriate software
- AgManager is an important agricultural site

